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ABSTRACT

This document profiles 16 elementary schools in British Columbia that are creating excitement about learning through innovative and creative practices. The schools and their activities are: Westwood Elementary School (Port Coquitlam)--a 1-day "mini-conference" to show students how math is relevant in daily life; Henderson Elementary School (Powell River)--emphasis on fine arts in the school and community; Central Elementary (Chilliwack)--a sixth-grade newspaper published and distributed to the community; Uplands Elementary School (Penticton)--integration of a disabled student's companion dog into the classroom; John Maclure Community School (Abbotsford)--planting 10 percent of the school grounds with native trees and plants; John A. Hutton Elementary (Grand Forks)--student activities and Web site based on a retired teacher's travels around North and South America; Dr. D. A. Perley Elementary School (Grand Forks)--Internet literacy and participation in the Canadian Heritage Interactive Journey; McGowan Park Elementary School (Kamloops)--sign language club and a "signing choir"; Twin Rivers Elementary School (Castlegar)--Russian immersion kindergarten and schoolwide bilingual program; R. L. Angus Elementary (Fort Nelson)--award-winning Web site; Craigflower Elementary (Victoria)--technology-based tutoring program for First Nations students; Cordova Bay Elementary (Saanich)--a walking "school bus" that "picks up" students walking to school for fitness and safety; Cedar Drive Elementary (Coquitlam)--energy conservation practices highlighted in a national documentary; West Vernon Elementary School--communication and conflict resolution training to address bullying; Tuc-el-Nuit Elementary School (Oliver)--volunteer tutoring of struggling readers; and Riverview Elementary (Quesnel)--award-winning principal who led school and community as they rebuilt after a school fire. (Contains photographs.) (SV)

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bright Lights

stories of success and excellence from BC elementary schools

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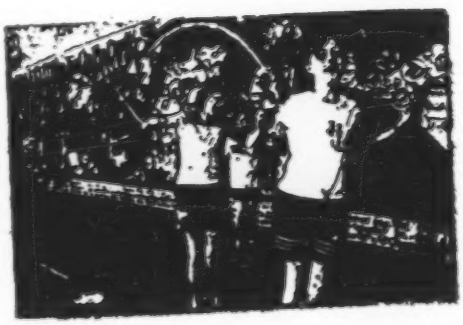

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foreword

BC elementary schools are vibrant and exciting places to be these days. In many communities, these schools are the "heart" of the community, full of innovative teaching and excitement about learning. As you will read in this booklet, BC Bright Lights include students who are reaching beyond their community borders, using the Internet to explore the world. They are also creating innovative art, doing lots of hands-on learning and much more.

BC's many excellent elementary schools are the result of the dedicated, passionate and professional guidance of numerous teachers, teaching assistants, administrators and parents, as well as supportive communities and the students themselves.

The stories in this issue of Bright Lights were submitted by both community newspapers and school districts, which are rightly proud of their schools and the people in them.

The stories profile educators who are getting students excited about learning, students who are creating a better world, and parents and other volunteers who are helping to make school a better place for students to be.

This is only a small sampling of what is happening throughout the province. And there's always room for improvement, of course.

But these Bright Lights show that BC elementary schools really do shine.

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math comes unplugged at Westwood Elementary

226 students
31 ESL students
9 special ed students

Here's a math question anybody can answer: How many students in an average classroom are likely to be enthusiastic about one of academia's most daunting subjects?

Just about anywhere, the answer would be "precious few."

Anywhere except Westwood Elementary School in Port Coquitlam.

That's because teacher Pamela Hagen has found a way to make math fun.

In 1997, Hagen had an idea—to turn school into a mini-conference centre for a day and show their Kindergarten to Grade 5 students how much fun math can be when approached with the right attitude. The event, dubbed Math Unplugged, has so captured the imagination of students and staff that Hagen won a Roy C. Hill Award of Great Merit from the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

"You'd be surprised how good these kids are. They don't realize that a lot of what they're doing is mathematics already."

Pam Hagen, teacher

"When we first introduced Math Unplugged as a day-long math activity three years ago, we got just a chorus of groans from the kids," recalls principal Ron Raible.

"They couldn't believe that we would be that cruel."

"The second year, and this year, faces brightened up when we told them. I see a real change in the way kids look at math," says Hagen.

"You've got to unplug them from that negative perception and low view of math, that it is abstract and not meaningful to them, that it is just something in a book."

To change that view, the school brings in some of the top math education experts in the province to show how math is relevant in daily life.

Students get to pick their own workshops, which come with names like Go Fly a ???!!!, Show Me the Munchy, Going on a Lion Hunt, Super Sleuth and Five, Four, Three, Two, One, Liftoff.

"It's making connections with real-life objects around them, things they see in books, measuring ingredients in the kitchen, going for a walk and seeing mathematics in nature all around them," Hagen says.

There are prizes, crafts and contests, plus "conference" packets and a commemorative pencil for each child.

Math Unplugged coordinator Pam Hagen and students find out just how much fun math can be.

Katherine Heinrich, a math professor at Simon Fraser University, notes the only unfortunate part about Math Unplugged is that it is unique.

"It's the only one I've ever even heard of, but I'd love to see it happen at every school," says Heinrich, who teaches a math course for elementary school teachers.

• *thanks to the Coquitlam School District and the Vancouver Sun for providing this story*

fine arts helps make bright futures at Henderson Elementary

238 students
0 ESL students
6 special ed students

When Henderson Elementary School in Powell River went through accreditation seven years ago, teachers and administrators brainstormed ways to strengthen their school.

They decided that by putting an emphasis on fine arts, they could encourage students to build cooperative skills and gain a stronger sense of community. Today, fine arts is an integral part of the teaching at Henderson.

One unique project students recently completed was a 50-foot-long alphabet mural.

The project involved the entire school as well as the community. All the children contributed drawings and painted the mural along with teachers, parents and older students from a nearby secondary school. Teacher Julia Griffith was instrumental in the making of a professional video about the mural. "With the video, our goal is to reach out to an even broader community," she said.

The mural has inspired a sense of pride in the students—these days there is no more graffitti. Instead, the students visit the mural to show others their contribution. And it is not only the students who are proud of it.

"The parents continue to get a lot of pleasure out of that piece of art," said Grade 4 teacher Wendy Halliday, "and it's not just because their child was involved in it. I think there is something very powerful about children's art."

Halliday said she has seen an improvement in cooperation between students in the last seven years. "What I'm particularly pleased about is how well the kids work together." The teachers have encouraged peer tutoring to get more communication between students and to get teachers out of the 'this is how you do it' role."

Halliday and Griffith have also noticed that their students have become better observers. They find that art motivates the students to get their other work done quickly and well. "They really work hard so they are able to work on their projects," said Halliday.

She added that despite the emphasis on art, she does not think they spend more time on art than other schools do. What they've learned to do is combine several small activities into one big activity with more thought. One of her recent art projects became a combined science project as her students learned to dye wool.

"I think they're doing things that seven years ago we would never have imagined our kids accomplishing," said Halliday. "I'm not thinking my students are going to turn into artists. I just hope that they live artfully, and that they feel very comfortable with the arts."

The colourful mural brightens the entrance to Henderson's kindergarten. Here with students Shelby Rivest, Jessica Shillen and Crystal Philip.

◆ *thanks to Emma Levez and the Powell River Peak for providing this story*

fun "times" at Central Elem tary

355 students
0 ESL students
29 special ed students

Central Elementary in Chilliwack has been taken over by shutterbugs, cub reporters, editors, ad sales staff and a busy publisher.

The Grade 6 class recently created its own newpaper, *The Central Times*, which was published in partnership with the community newspaper, *The Times*. Not to be confused with a school newsletter, *The Central Times* was a real newspaper, and was distributed to more than 7,000 homes in downtown Chilliwack.

"This is a great opportunity to get young people involved in our industry," *Times* publisher Randall Taylor said.

"It will help them understand the value of working on a project, taking it through to completion and then distributing it to their community."

The class came up with a number of story ideas and selected students to write, take photos, edit, sell advertisements and do graphic design.

The Central Times news staff.

Teacher Gabriel D'Archangelo said the project helped his students find many positive aspects to their school and discover creative ways to show them off.

Student editor Ashley Preikschas said the novel concept helped students learn about careers in graphic design, sales, computers and writing.

"We're the first (elementary) school to do this in the district and I think that's cool," Preikschas said.

Staff from *The Times* coached students on different aspects of newspaper production, and School District 33's computer techie Graham Wilson gave students pointers on the different computer programs they were using.

Student editor Brittany Smart, who loves to write and is good at spelling and grammar, said the process opened her eyes to a possible career.

"It's given us time to learn about all sorts of skills...so maybe we'll grow up and be staff at a newspaper."

The project proved popular in business circles, too. All advertising spaces, which helped to pay for production and printing, sold quickly.

D'Archangelo is proud of his students and the way they tackled such a big project.

"Everybody had an opportunity to show off the skill they got," he said.

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"They've taken an original idea from concept to production, integrating it into their courses of study. Enhanced student writing, computer processing, picture scanning and layout were enthusiastically learned by students with a mission."
Clyde Dougans, principal

◆ *thanks to Patty Hutton and the Chilliwack Times for providing this story*

student gives paws at Uplands Elementary

324 students
3 ESL students
7 special ed students

There's a dog in Katie Hicks' Grade 5 classroom at Uplands Elementary School in Penticton, and he's not there for show-and-tell.

Jet, a two-and-a-half-year-old black Lab, is a companion dog for 11-year-old Sarah Wardlaw, who has cerebral palsy. And Jet's treated just like one of the students.

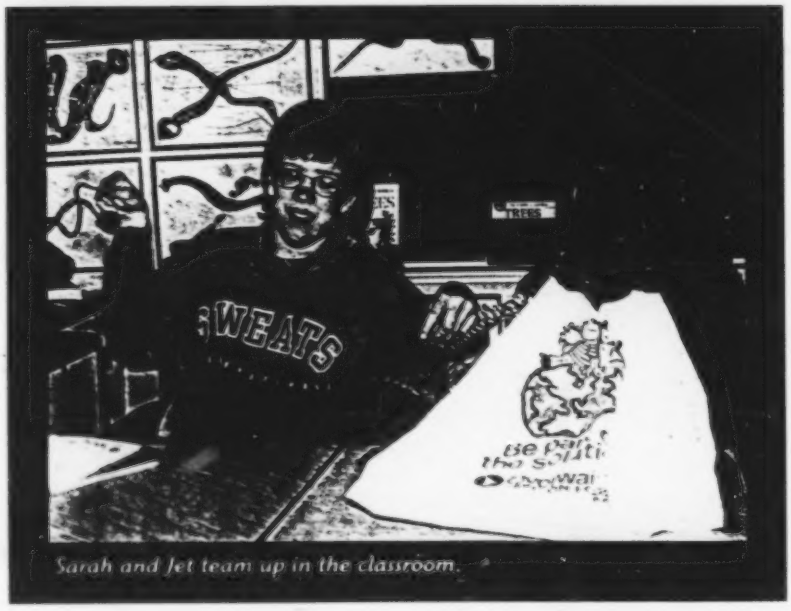
Jet's fellow classmates have adjusted well to his attendance at school.

Jet began his training with the Pacific Assistance Dog Society (PADS), and now helps Sarah at home as well as joining her all day at school—opening doors, carrying papers and retrieving dropped items from the floor.

For Sarah, having Jet at school has made it much easier for her as well as the rest of the class. "If I drop this pen right now I would have had to ask somebody to help me and the kids are busy with their own work," she says. From her wheelchair, Sarah directs Jet's movements with a leash and is able to give him verbal commands.

Jet's a well-loved dog and although the other students know they can't pet him while he's working with Sarah, he gets plenty of affection when school work is done.

Hicks says Jet has already learned a great deal about behaving in the classroom, halls and at assembly. And he's good about not chewing felt pens!



Sarah and Jet team up in the classroom.

There are times, however, when like any dog, Jet gets excited.

"When we're singing and clapping he starts howling," says Hicks. And imagine 26 kids and Jet running in a gymnasium. That's when the laughing starts.

"Right from the start we stressed in the classroom that he was a student because he was learning too," says Hicks.

"It's really neat because it's like having another kid in the classroom and it's good for everyone," says Sarah's classmate Jocelyn Dewdney.

Student Matt Margetts agrees. Last year he helped Sarah bring things to the front of the class. Now Jet can do it for her.

Sarah said she's the only child in the Okanagan to have a dog like Jet, and so far it's proving very successful.

"The school had some concerns at first, but we were also really anxious to see how we could help and I'm surprised at how smoothly things have gone. Jet's not a distraction in class," says Hicks.

"He's a really great friend for Sarah," said Sarah's twin sister and classmate, Laura Wardlaw. Jet will be even more important when Sarah gets older and enters junior high school. But until then, the students at Uplands, including Jet, will keep learning and having fun together.

◆ *thanks to Eileen Brent and the Penticton Western News-Advertiser for providing this story*

leaving legacies at John Maclure Community School

455 students
44 ESL students
4 special ed students

Reminders of graduates from years past are all around John Maclure Community School in Abbotsford.

"Our intent is that the Grade 7 students can leave something behind. Not just for the school, but for the community," says Pierre Welbedagt, community school coordinator. And they have.

For the past four years, Grade 7 students have planned a legacy project—something to leave behind, not only for their teachers and younger schoolmates, but for the neighbourhood as well.

One year, the students noticed there weren't any outdoor basketball courts, so they took that on as a massive project. With funding from the city, recreation commission and school district, two courts were built.

Another project was a mural, depicting John Maclure's Thunderbird logo.

Last year, they planted a tree on the school grounds to provide shade in future years and painted a fence that separates school property from a neighbouring townhouse subdivision.

The most recent project coincides nicely with an Evergreen Foundation project.

John Maclure students help to create green space.

The foundation, which promotes 'greening' projects in schools, chose John Maclure as its model school in Abbotsford. Over the next two years, the school—its students, parent advisory council and staff—will cover 10 per cent of the school grounds with plants that are native to the area.

Although shade is the immediate benefit for people in the community, Welbedagt notes there's more to be gained. "It will also be a great habitat for birds and insects," he explains.

As for the plants, the students are responsible for more than just planting them. Part of the Evergreen Foundation project means caring for the green space.

"The Grade 7s will eventually take over planning, planting and watering of the area," says Welbedagt. "That's their legacy."

The legacy project fits in well with the spirit of a community school, which is an important part of the life of the neighbourhood. The school holds evening programs for adults, whether they have children attending school or not, and for children. "It's a school all citizens of the community have access to," says Welbedagt.

"It makes for a healthier community, an empowered community," says Welbedagt.

◆ *thanks to Mia Thomas and the Abbotsford/Mission Times for providing this story*

going interactive at John A. Hutton Elementary

415 students
0 ESL students
8 special ed students

Two years ago, retired educator Lach Farrell set out in his truck "Big Blue" to drive around North and South America.

As he travelled, Farrell sent back journal entries, questions, facts, photos and even video footage to students at John A. Hutton Elementary in Grand Forks, all via the Internet.

The name for Farrell's project is TACT, which stands for Two Americas Circumnavigation Trek.

The students received the information, used it for assignments in class and loaded it onto a school web page. They were responsible for scanning and editing the photos, video images and other elements that make up the site. "I've gotten thousands of pictures back," says Grade 7 teacher Andrew McKinlay, who oversaw the project at Hutton.

The site contains images of penguins from the Galapagos Islands, a volcano crater in Nicaragua, street scenes of urban life in Argentina and much more. It also contains journal entries describing the lands and people, and interesting customs in the areas Farrell travelled to.

The TACT website has had more than 600,000 hits since it started. In the two school years since Farrell began his trip around the Americas, this translates into about 1,300 visits to the site every day.

While many of the people checking out the website are from Canada, there have been visitors from Australia to South Africa to Norway. According to the statistics provided by the web server, the site has even been visited by people sitting at US government and military computer terminals. "It's not just Canadian kids that are using it," says McKinlay. TACT has also attracted media attention from the local press, BCTV and even the Washington, DC, newspaper, *The Washington Times*.

Although Farrell is now back at home in Canada, with all the information he sent back along the way he has managed to provide a valuable educational tool to kids both in Grand Forks and across the province and country.

Lach Farrell talking about his travels with students back in Grand Forks.

Check out the TACT project at
www.tactproject.com

or at the school district's site
www.boundaryschools.com

◆ *thanks to Michael Chouinard and the Grand Forks Gazette for providing this story*

wired for speed at Dr. D.A. Perley Elementary

355 students
0 ESL students
34 special ed students

When you talk about students being wired, the picture that usually comes to mind is a group of kids who are over-excited or have had a little too much sugar. At Dr. D.A. Perley Elementary School in Grand Forks, though, wired means having 60 to 70 computers, all connected at the same time to super-fast cable Internet access.

"Most schools in the province can't boast that number of computers and that amount of Internet access," says Bob MacLean, the principal of Dr. D.A. Perley. But it's not only the sheer number of Internet-connected computers that make MacLean proud. It's also the level of Internet knowledge that the teachers—and students—have.

And that level of Internet savvy at Dr. D.A. Perley also led to the school being chosen as one of about 75 schools across Canada to participate in the Canadian Heritage Interactive Journey last spring.

The project, in which a group of cyclists crossed the country and visited schools along the way, helped students learn about Canadian geography, culture and history. A web site was set up to document the nine-week, coast-to-coast ride, and each host school contributed information about their community to the web site.

Perley students researched aspects of history in Grand Forks and then put the information on the Canadian Heritage Interactive Journey web site. There's everything from the history of the local Junior B hockey team to the story of Golden Heights, a 100-year-mansion in Grand Forks that was recently restored and turned into an inn and restaurant.

MacLean says he's pleased to be on the cutting edge. "We're proud to be able to say that our students are wired—wired into the new technology that's certain to play a defining role for everyone in the new millennium."

The highlight of the Canadian Heritage Interactive Journey for Dr. D.A. Perley students was the day when two of the cross-country cyclists (Donna McIntosh and Will Carlson) stopped in Grand Forks to speak at the school.

Check out the Canadian Heritage Interactive Journey website at www.chij.com

◆ *thanks to Karen Heiber and the Grand Forks Gazette for providing this story*

silently singing at McGowan Park Elementary

344 students
8 ESL students
12 special ed students

orty Kamloops McGowan Park Elementary School students headed to Ottawa last Canada Day to show off some fancy handwork.

The members of the McGowan Park Sign Language Club were invited to perform on the main stage during the celebrations on Parliament Hill. There they demonstrated the emotional singing and signing which has already earned them acclaim from many, including the CBC and BCTV.

The club, which now has about 90 members, was founded in September 1995 after Danielle Arsenault, then a Grade 3 student, proposed the idea as a way to continue the basic signing she had learned while in teacher Vicci Newman's class the year before. In the same class was hearing-impaired student Erin Whettell.

"We had done English signing to music in the class as a way to include Erin," says Newman, the group's conductor. "Teaching the class to sign a song is one thing, but a whole signing choir is quite another."

Although she has had no formal sign training, Newman says she selected a batch of songs and began to hold regular practices.

"I really try to pick songs with an emotional hook, but they also have to be the right tempo. The idea is to have students all doing the same sign at the same time."

reflecting the needs of the community at

291 students
2 ESL students
2 special ed students

alk the halls of Twin Rivers Elementary School in Castlegar and as you read the signs in the hallways, you will quickly realize this school is different from all others in British Columbia.

Each sign is written in English and French, as you might expect, and also in Russian.

Because of the Doukhobor population in Castlegar, Russian is the second language in the area.

Russian was first offered in 1964 as an elective at Castlegar's Stanley Humphries Secondary School. The Russian community soon began urging the school district to offer Russian to students at an earlier age. They also saw the need to expand it to include an immersion-type program.

Russian Immersion students at their Grade 6 graduation.

With the help of *Parents for Russian*, a parents' group founded in 1982, the Russian Bilingual program was born at Twin Rivers, with 18 Kindergarten students. Now the program is so popular that prior to registration day, parents pack up lawn chairs, coolers, sleeping bags and other necessities and spend a cold March night outside Castlegar Primary School to ensure their children get a place in the program.

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Singing never sounded like this! The McGowan Park Sign Language Club wins enthusiastic applause wherever it performs.

• *thanks to Elspeth Duurtsema and Kamloops This Week for providing this story*

Twin Rivers Elementary

In the program, Kindergarten is taught totally in Russian. When the Russian Immersion child enters Grades 1, 2 and 3, the focus changes somewhat—by then the student has a basic working knowledge of the Russian language and classes are taught half the time in English and half the time in Russian.

Then, in Grades 4 through 6, the focus shifts more to English, and Russian is taught only one hour a day.

Peter Evdokimoff, the Russian Curriculum Language Coordinator, says that while the focus is always to enable the child to become fluent in Russian, there are other good things that come out of the program.

"Research shows that the immersion style program tends to have students come out with a heightened awareness of languages in general. And second languages generally enhance thinking skills. Second languages are a form of enrichment."

As well, immersion students learn tolerance and appreciation of other cultures—an important asset in today's world which heartily embraces other cultures, and particularly important given the new global economy.

"There is a clear language and content focus for the child and they're challenged on a daily basis. They must work hard at achieving set goals and to develop a sound work ethic," he says.

These students, he adds, carry those hard-earned skills with them through life.

That, he said, is the true measure of the program's success.

The students wrote and performed several plays all in Russian, then received their diplomas.

• *thanks to Karen Kerkhoff and the Castlegar Sun for providing this story*

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R.L. Angus webstars shine in national competition

264 students
1 ESL student
5 special ed students

Stand back and let the kids do it could be the motto at R.L. Angus Elementary in Fort Nelson . . . especially when it comes to the Internet.

The R.L. Angus WebStar Worldwide Web development team, along with other Angus students, recently captured cash, hardware and software prizes totalling over $1,000 in a national educational website competition. The competition was open to all K to 12 schools in Canada. Against stiff competition, which included numerous senior secondary schools, Angus students ranked especially high in the Technical and Design categories—an outstanding achievement. Overall, the site was ranked 12th nationally.

The WebStars, a group of Grade 4 to 7 students in School District 81's Elementary Challenge Program, led by student webmaster Michael Gilbert, prepared for the competition over 12 months. Using a server and software donated by the *Fort Nelson News*, the students performed all software and hardware installation, and maintained and operated the site without adult intervention.

The site focuses on the community of Fort Nelson and presents research done by numerous students at the school, as well as contributions by local authors Shirlee Smith Matheson, who wrote "Flying Ghosts" and "The Gambler's Daughter," and Gerry Young. The Fort Nelson Aboriginal Project also forms part of the site's content.

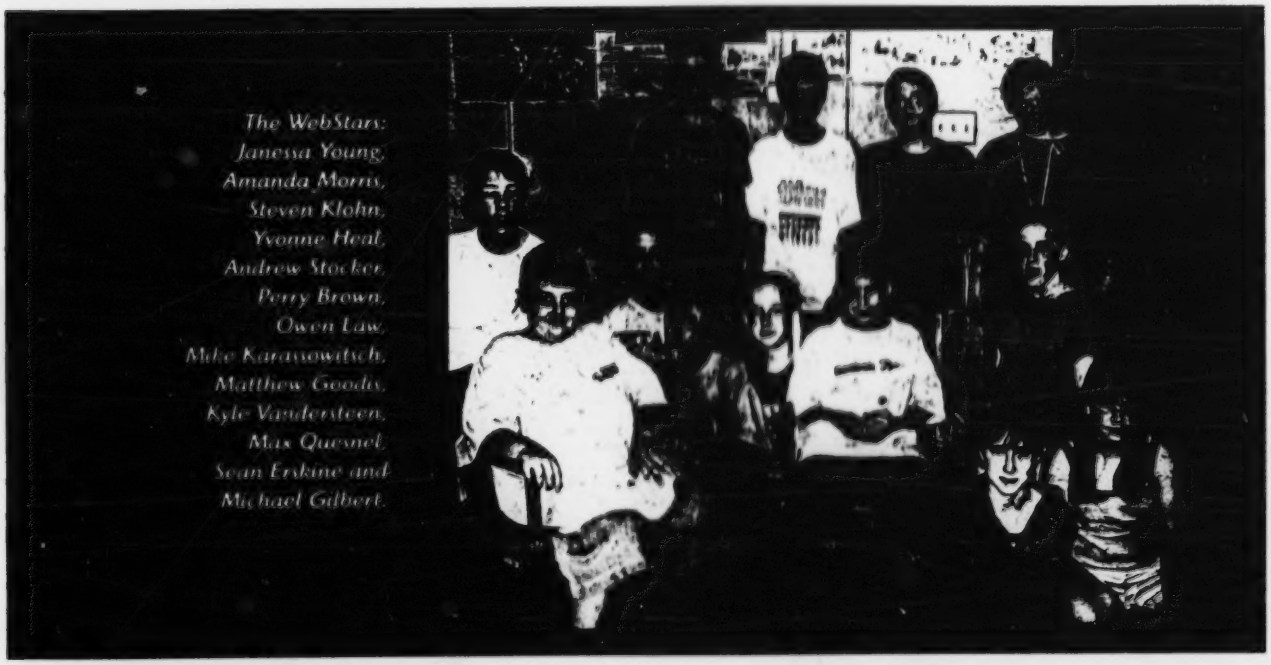
In addition, community members throughout Fort Nelson contributed to the project's success by providing interviews, artifacts and information.

R.L. Angus principal Bruce Weicker is thrilled with the WebStars' achievement. "It proves that kids of any age can do amazing things if given the opportunity. We need to open more doors for them and stand back," Weicker says.

This achievement is a testimony to the district's commitment to excellence in the area of Information Technology—a commitment which began several years ago. As young Gilbert says, "when it comes to working with computers, Fort Nelson kids are in the big leagues."

The winning R.L. Angus site can be viewed at: http://rla.sd81.bc.ca.

◆ *thanks to the Fort Nelson News for providing this story*



The WebStars: Janessa Young, Amanda Morris, Steven Klohn, Yvonne Heal, Andrew Stocker, Perry Brown, Owen Law, Mike Karanowitsch, Matthew Goodis, Kyle Vanderveen, Max Quesnel, Sean Erskine and Michael Gilbert.

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First Nations students advance with technology: Craigflower Elementary

243 students
13 ESL students
5 special ed students

In a bright and sunny classroom decorated with posters of First Nations artists and achievers, First Nations students at Craigflower Elementary in Victoria practise math, reading and writing on eight bright new iMac computers.

Every day, up to 60 students in small groups visit the class where Genevieve Gleason, the First Nations Skill Development teacher, and Pam Williams, First Nations Cultural Assistant, help students with their schoolwork.

The new computers, funded by a First Nations Technology grant, run the SuccessMaker program and are all linked to one another.

SuccessMaker, a program with a strong visual and auditory component, keeps a record of each student's progress and provides extra practice on each individual's areas of academic need.

Gleason is amazed and excited by the SuccessMaker program. If students are able to use it every day, even just for 15 minutes, they can improve their grade level dramatically.

"These aren't games," Gleason says. "Students are working on the same concepts they learn in the classroom. The machines 'talk to them' and hearing words like 'equilateral triangle' and 'lines of symmetry' over and over really improves their vocabulary. The computer can also show graphically how to do a problem.

Louie Thomas and Harley Rice work with First Nations Skill Development teacher Genevieve Gleason to improve their math and reading skills.

"Computers can spread a teacher around enormously," adds Gleason, who works with students off the computer, too. "And the students look forward to it. They come and ask when they can use the computers."

As the students complete each program, they are rewarded with a certificate.

Nearly one third of Craigflower's students are First Nations. Gleason, who has Ktunaxa and Cree heritage from her mother's side, says, "Over the years, each generation is getting more competent academically. This is just one more way to help it improve. Currently, we have a graduation rate that is greatly exceeded by the drop-out rate, so we need to change that."

Nella Nelson, coordinator for First Nations programs in the Victoria School District, agrees. "We believe that there is First Nations pride through education and First Nations success through education."

And at Craigflower, they are working hard to encourage that success.

11

Cordova Bay Elementary:
no ticket required for this bus ride!

315 students
9 ESL students
13 special ed. students

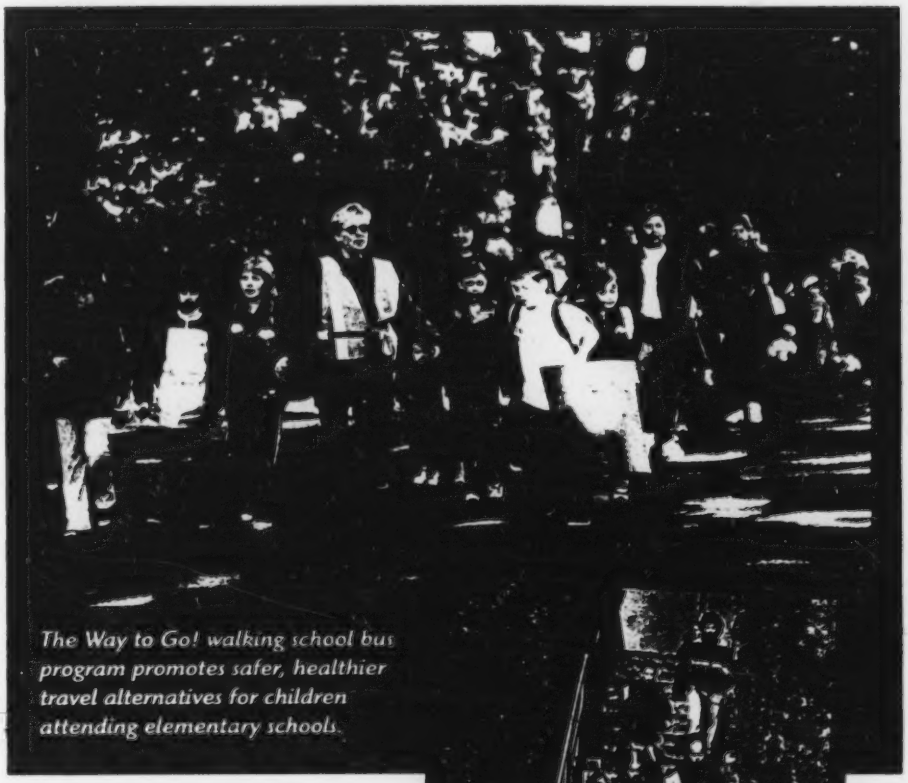
Ever hear of a school bus that has no wheels, no driver and doesn't need gasoline? There's a school bus just like it at Cordova Bay Elementary in Saanich, where the school's Parent Advisory Council, along with school staff and students, administrators, the community and local police support have started the "Way to Go!" Walking School Bus Program.

Here's how it works. The Walking School Bus is basically a chain of children that grows at each stop. The adult route captain living furthest away from the school leaves at a designated time in the morning. She or he walks along a specific route picking up children at their homes or meeting spots. The "bus" gets bigger as it goes along on its way to school. Route captains wear safety vests to identify themselves as leaders and for visibility.

"It's a wonderful school and community project," says principal Dominique Boltres. "The program is a good start to fitness. It reduces pollution, addresses traffic issues and promotes community spirit—students get to know each other and their families."

Launched on Earth Day, the walking bus received national media attention. It has also been filmed as part of a documentary to help start a nationwide program of Walking Buses. "On kick-off day, 250 children walked to school," boasts Boltres, "and it continues to be successful due to our committed parents."

The program is part of the school's commitment to safety and healthy living. Currently running only in the mornings, it is hoped that it will expand to an after-school program.



The Way to Go! walking school bus program promotes safer, healthier travel alternatives for children attending elementary schools.

◆ *thanks to the Saanich School District for providing this story*

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lights, camera, conservation! Cedar Drive Elementary

322 students
69 ESL students
28 special ed students

Conserving energy can do more than help the environment —it can get you in the movies.

At least that's what happened to students at Cedar Drive Elementary in Coquitlam.

Because of their efforts to conserve energy in the classroom, Sean Sullivan's Grade 5 class landed a part in the recently completed National Film Board of Canada movie, *Global Climate Change: Hitting Home*.

The film centres around the topic of global warming and travels the world for practical and promising solutions to climate changes: solar energy in China, wind farms in Denmark and energy efficiency in BC.

The film is supported by CBC's *The Nature of Things*, Environment Canada and the Canadian International Development Agency.

"In our school, we are trying to reduce the amount of energy we are using," says Cedar Drive principal Ross Hardin. "A couple of years ago, the SAGE Foundation provided 19 schools, including ours, with workshops and information on how to reduce energy, mainly electrical and gas, and how to reduce solid waste."

A camera crew from the National Film Board films children working on conservation at Cedar Drive Elementary School.

The SAGE Foundation is a Canadian non-profit organization that provides support for environmental projects in schools.

Hardin said that the SAGE Destination Conservation program has been in place at the school for about three years. Two years ago the school saved $2,400 in energy costs by turning off lights and other simple energy saving solutions. Last year, they saved almost $6,000!

The students of Cedar Drive were so enthusiastic about the Destination Conservation project that they were awarded the Jerry Jameson Lifelong Learner Award by the SAGE Foundation.

"We are very proud," says Hardin of the award and film role. "And most importantly, the kids see that they can make a change in their environment," he adds.

"Kids see that the small things we do, like turning off lights, can help in the big picture. Kids see we can do something — that's important. In order for this to work we need the kids to help. They are the next generation."

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◆ *thanks to the Coquitlam School District, Jolanda Waskito and Coquitlam Now for providing this story*

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better ways to deal with bullying at West Vernon Elementary

324 students
0 ESL students
17 special ed students

Bullying in BC schools has been getting a lot of attention recently, and at West Vernon Elementary School students, teachers and administration are working hard at helping kids find better ways to deal with conflict.

"We try to get them to solve the problems through words and by saying how they are feeling," says counsellor Penny Fleming. Children are encouraged to talk about their problems and what they would like to see happen.

In the Kidzone, a supervised classroom, students spend time playing games and interacting with the person they had problems with. This builds skills they can take to the classroom and the playground. And it seems to be working.

Children are encouraged to make contracts about behaviour modification with Fleming or principal Anne Mackie, and work toward such rewards as lunch with the teacher, free time, recognition or buying something to share with the class.

Cara Ross, Grade 7, Brynne Valouch, Grade 7 and Patrick Quigley, Grade 5, like the way students are learning to deal with problems in and out of the classroom. "We have a leadership group where some of the older kids help the others if they are being picked on and if the teachers catch anyone fighting, you make an action plan and talk to your parents about it," says Ross.

Grade 5 student Patrick Quigley adds, "I know what this is like because I used to be a bully and pick on other kids and I got tired of being in trouble. I have also been the victim. It is not a very good feeling to be the victim. Now if I call someone a name, I feel guilty."

"The children like the positive attention and they are learning to ask for help when they need it," says counsellor Penny Fleming.

West Vernon principal Anne Mackie

Anne Mackie speaks softly, but she's taking on a big project — to stop bullying in her school.

"The first thing we do is give them the language to use when dealing with things that happen on the playground," says the West Vernon Elementary principal, who has been working on implementing a bully-proofing and anti-harassment program.

"If someone is calling names on the playground, we want the students to say, 'You're name-calling and I want you to stop it.' The children learn assertiveness and the power of speech."

The program builds on the Lions Quest program which focuses on developing understanding, communication and conflict resolution skills. The teachers have been trained in the Safe Schools modules designed by the school district.

"We need to improve our own skills and model these for the kids," says Mackie. "This district has been teaching conflict resolution since 1991 and is a leader in the province in working toward safer schools."

Mackie and the classroom teachers keep track of behaviour and when they see the same problems recurring, they spend time with the students and do things like role-playing to help them understand the consequences of their actions.

She admits it is a time-intensive approach, but she's convinced that children are worth the effort. "We need to make sure that kids who hurt other kids know what the impact is and that kids who are hurt are heard. We have to help them learn how to work through problems — that anger can be dealt with and problems can be solved.

"I feel optimistic. I think kids can be taught but it has to be a priority. It's mine."

◆ *thanks to Cara MacDonald and the Vernon Morning Star for providing these stories*

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one-to-one success at Tuc-el-Nuit Elementary

322 students
6 ESL students
10 special ed students

As any teacher knows, in school—as in life—you have to be able to read well to succeed.

And at Tuc-el-Nuit Elementary School in Oliver, you can now see confidence on the faces of children who once struggled with the written word. Principal Glenn Dobie attributes that confidence to one source: the school's new One-to-One reading program.

One-to-One focuses on students who fall in the "grey area" of reading and other school skills, kids who fall below their peers when it comes to reading skills, but who do not qualify for special education status.

Students involved in the program do not receive other specialized help in the school. Instead they are tutored by community volunteers who spend 30 minutes with each student four days per week. The volunteers each put in one-and-one-half hours per session at the school, allowing them to work with three students each day.

One-to-One was developed by Vernon parent Debbie Schiller who became concerned over her child's poor reading ability. Her program has since been implemented all over Vernon. Tuc-el-Nuit is the first school in the Okanagan Similkameen school district to try out the program.

Tutor Gayle Wright with Grade 1 student Christine Peterman.

The Tuc-el-Nuit One-to-One program involved students in grades 1 to 3 only. However, the program is expanding this year to include students from grades 1 to 7. Dobie expects one in 12 Tuc-el-Nuit students will go through the program.

Dobie says that results are noticeable in just a few weeks. "Teachers have noticed skill level and attitude improvements — the kids are less reluctant and are more enthused.

"Of all the programs I've seen, I couldn't be more thrilled with the success of this program. It's almost been overwhelming — all the strengths have come forward and all the concerns have been alleviated."

Dobie uses the example of one boy in Grade 3 who was always reluctant to return to school after his lunch break.

"His attitude has changed ... he is one of our most successful students. He was very bright but lacked confidence.

"I've seen him walk out of that program walking on air, he's happy, he's bouncing," Dobie happily reported.

"Lots of kids need that TLC, that one-on-one. Thirty kids in a class doesn't allow that.

"I just smile when I think about it."

• *thanks to Kathleen Wilson and the Oliver Chronicle for providing this story*

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the "best" principal in Canada right here at Riverview Elementary

156 students
0 ESL students
23 special ed students

Although Paige Sadler, principal of Riverview Elementary in Quesnel, denies being special, her students disagree. They tell newcomers that their principal is the best in all of Canada, and she has an award to prove it.

Sadler recently won the Canadian Home and School Federation's Dr. Samuel R. Laycock Award. The annual award is presented to an educator who loves children and is interested in the education of all children, and who relates well and enlists the cooperation of children, teachers and parents, has dynamic leadership qualities, inspires others to achieve, and has made a real contribution to the relationship between school and the home.

Nominated by the Riverview Elementary Parent Advisory Council (PAC), Sadler says she was shocked and humbled at receiving the award. But it may have been adversity that planted the seed for the respect everyone has for her.

Four years ago, an arsonist burned down Riverview. Sadler had been principal for just six months at the time. After the fire, students and teachers had to share space with another school. The challenges of that situation prompted the PAC to rally to rebuild Riverview. After much effort on everyone's part, they now have a beautiful new building.

Throughout that difficult time, Sadler emerged as a positive, supportive force to staff and students. Her philosophy is to cut through the bureaucracy and always remember that people are what is most important.

Principal Paige Sadler with a few of her student fans.

Sadler organized a huge contest to come up with a belief or mission statement for the new school. Students, parents and teachers were all asked to dream of their perfect school. From this came the statement, "At Riverview, we are a community of responsible, respectful, learning, caring citizens."

Sadler emphasizes teamwork at her school and building connections with the community, such as with the RCMP and public health nurse. For example, Riverview's Student Council is getting stronger by the year, and according to Sadler, the staff and the school's noon-hour supervisor and learning assistance programs are very strong.

And Riverview has a Star program, which recognizes positive behaviours throughout the school. There are also weekly assemblies which are organized and run by two teams of students. At the assembly, kindness awards are given out to students who have been observed to be kind to someone. As well, two students from each class come up to describe what their class has learned that week.

Being an inner city school, Riverview faces many challenges, including a transient population. This year, nearly half the students were new.

But the best part of receiving the award is hearing the pride in the students' voices as they tell the new students that their principal is the best!

◆ *thanks to the BCCPAC newsletter for reporting on this story.*

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The Ministry of Education would like to thank the newspapers and school districts which shared stories of the Bright Lights in their communities.

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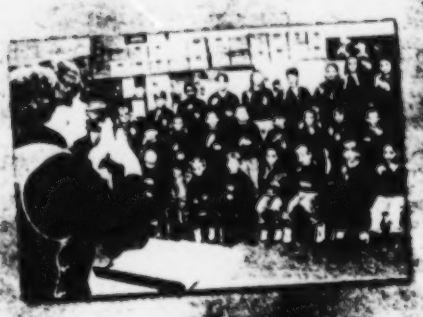

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